

A photograph of a college campus. In the foreground, there is a tall flagpole with the American flag. To the right, a paved path leads into the distance, with two people walking away from the camera. The background is filled with green trees and a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

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of Education

Southeast Community College Beatrice

Uncovering Hidden Potential:

Finding gender equality through gender nontraditional education

What is Gender Nontraditional?

A gender nontraditional field is defined as an occupation or field of work, including careers in computer science, technology, and other emerging high skill occupations, for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work.



Gender nontraditional programs include Agriculture Business and Management Technology, and Mass Media for women, and Practical Nursing and Office Technology for men.

Why do we need Gender Nontraditional Education?

- Households headed by single women in Beatrice are nearly three times more likely than other Nebraska households to fall below the poverty income level (27.4% compared to 9.7%). (Nebraska Census, 2000)
- In Nebraska, 80% of the workers in the 20 lowest paying job classifications are **women**. (Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women, Status Report, January 2003)
- Poverty data also shows that women 65 or older are about half as likely as men to have a pension other than **social security**. (Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women, Status Report, January 2003)

- Three out of four working women earn less than \$25,000 a year. (Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women, Status Report, January 2003)



- Nebraska women's median annual income is 73.8% of men's median annual income. (Nebraska Census, 2000)

Barriers to Gender Nontraditional Education

Cultural bias - Individual cultural backgrounds and society's expectations tend to promote traditional rather than nontraditional gender behavior, abilities, interests, and values in relation to work. Overcoming pervasive cultural bias requires equally strong academic, social, and personal commitment.

Academic/career bias – Unfortunately, school systems inadvertently perpetuate cultural bias. Women in particular are not encouraged to pursue typically “male” careers, such as science, research, and especially technology. To overcome this historical bias, students need well-trained faculty and advisors to provide awareness, encouragement, information, ongoing advising, and support. Retention is positively affected when students establish relationships and bonds within an institution. Students enrolled in gender nontraditional college programs sometimes need the structure provided by an identifiable support program.

Lack of career exploration and knowledge – Many students have not been presented with the opportunity to consider gender nontraditional career options, participate in assessment testing or study educational programs. Because of shrinking budgets, fewer high schools are offering vocational courses; therefore, students are not regularly exposed to a full range of career options. Special efforts are needed to overcome this hindrance and introduce gender nontraditional occupations and training to both high school and re-careering or age-nontraditional students.

Financial barriers – Financial concerns will often affect persistence, grade point average, and completion outcomes. Women are especially vulnerable because of their historically inferior earning power. Recent data show that 46.5% of SCC students have significant financial needs and receive need-based financial aid. Even more, 59.6% of gender nontraditional students receive some form of financial assistance. In addition to financial resources, many students need financial aid counseling that helps them reach their educational goals without acquiring more debt and creating more obstacles for success.

Promoting GNT Education



Career Discovery EXPO – Potential students will tour Southeast Community College's Beatrice Campus and learn about the varied options leading to their futures. Programs will provide imaginative and eye-catching demonstrations, showing a glimpse of the coursework.

Mini-Training for Counselors and Teachers – The EXPO provided an excellent opportunity for introducing gender nontraditional programs and discussing how to present these programs to males and females in a non-biased fashion.

True Colors Assessments – The True Colors assessment gives students a fun and memorable way to learn about their various personality traits and how those traits might tie into potential courses of study and career choices in the future.

Educational Assistance Grants and Financial Aid Counseling – One of the many ways SCC helps to ease the common strains associated with college.

Women's Leadership Conference – SCC provides funding to give women the opportunity to gain insight into being successful in college and in pursuing careers in male-dominated fields after graduation.



Exploring the EXPO

Emphasizing a “see-it, feel-it, experience-it” method of demonstration, the Career EXPO was a great way to educate high school students about possibilities for the future and encourage their interest in gender nontraditional careers.



Schools attending included Falls City, Humboldt-Table Rock-Steinauer, Lewiston, Nebraska City, Nemaha Valley, Southeast Consolidated, Sterling, Syracuse, and Tecumseh. Over 250 students from diverse backgrounds participated, in addition to many high school teachers and counselors.

Teaching the Teachers

For students to receive the best career advice, teachers and counselors also need information that is up-to-date and gender sensitive. To that end, the Project Director conducted a training session for teachers and counselors who attended the EXPO.

While the EXPO provided an excellent opportunity to introduce students to gender nontraditional programs, the session with teachers and counselors was a time to educate the educators on how to present these nontraditional programs to students in a non-biased fashion.

- Each counselor received a take-home promotional kit to help promote nontraditional careers and educational programs.



True Colors



Frequently, the focus for students in higher education is on adapting skills and intelligence to a chosen career, but little emphasis is given to whether or not a



student's personality type fits the proposed career track. The True Colors personality assessment gives students a fun and memorable way to learn about their various personality traits and how those traits might tie into potential courses of study and career choices in the future. By associating the True Colors results with careers, counselors can help identify areas of study that



lead to careers in which students can maximize their skill sets, utilize their intelligence, and match their individual personality types with rewarding jobs.



Educational Assistance Grants and Financial Aid Counseling



The grant provided 14 scholarships for students enrolled in gender nontraditional programs, 10 females in Agriculture; 4 males in Nursing.

Of the 10 females in Agriculture, 4 graduated and 6 are continuing at SCC.

Of the 4 males in Nursing, 3 graduated; 1 changed majors



Women's Leadership Conference

Gender Nontraditional Education isn't just about classroom skills and techniques for getting the job done, it must also include methods in how to find jobs and thrive in a male-dominated workforce.

SCC hosted a Women's Leadership Conference on the Milford Campus for all SCC women. Participants heard speakers who were themselves gender nontraditional role models discussing success tips, resume and interview techniques, and gender issues/solutions in the workplace. 19 participants completed the evaluation, with 100% describing their conference experience and speakers as "Excellent," and 100% saying they would recommend that others participate in this conference.



Profile of NT Programs at SCC

Of the 414 gender nontraditional students enrolled in SCC programs in 2005-06

- 196 were males (47%) and 218 (52%) were females
- 74 (60%) qualified for PELL grants
- 95 (77%) had taken developmental classes at some time during their matriculation
- 8 (6.5%) were single parents
- 2 (1.6%) had disabilities
- 6 (4.8%) were minority races.
- 123 (29.7%) gender nontraditional students graduated from their programs, 54 males and 69 females.

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